



Board of Trustees Newsletter Term 1 2020

Dear St Heliers School Community

I wondered for a while as to which words would be the best to begin a newsletter that is written at such an unprecedented time in our lives. We really have no choice but to seek out the positives in our current situation and I think I will begin by saying that if you have to be confined to a suburb for four weeks we are absolutely blessed to be stuck in St Heliers. Do make time in each day to get fresh air and re-visit all of our beautiful walks: Churchill Park, Mt Taylor, Tahuna Torea and more.



I hope that you are all doing well as you navigate the task of deciding what the next month will look like for you and your family. We are in our new school holiday break now, but I want to reinforce the message that even when Term 2 begins at home on 15 April, there is no academic emergency for you to mitigate. You are not required or expected to create the perfect home school environment from 9am-3pm, especially with many of you also working from home.

Our teaching staff have been simply incredible over the past week, accessing and sharing online resources for your children, and we absolutely want our young peoples' minds to be engaged over the coming weeks. However note that the Ministry of Education has set a guideline that suggests just one hour of learning in the morning, and one and a half hours in the afternoon. I know that next week Craig will be sending out a suggested timetable that you can refer to, so keep an eye out for that. The Ministry also suggest active time and creative time, so set a lego challenge, locate those jump-jam links, listen to David Walliams and his daily stories and focus on encouraging calm, happy children who are cherishing this opportunity for increased family connection time.

Term One. St Heliers School had a wonderful start to 2020. There were many exciting class trips, Year 4–8 swimming sports, the Top Schools challenge, huge school teams in both the Weetbix Triathlon and Round the Bays, and of course Year 7 Challenges Week and Year 8 Camp. I am thankful that the students and parent helpers alike were able to enjoy these memorable events, all of which highlighted the energy, positivity, and supportive culture that is part of our school. The Board would like to extend a big thank you to every staff member and parent who helped to make these events possible.

PTA. The PTA also began the year strongly, hosting our Meet the Teachers Evening, the first Welcome to School coffee morning for new families, and the very popular ice-block Friday. They have a full calendar of fundraising and community events for the year which no doubt will require some tweaks and adjustments in light of current events, but I know we will all very much enjoy coming together in support of the school when we are able.

Principal Appraisal. Each year at this time we receive our Principal Appraisal report. This is handled externally for the Board by education consultants EDSOL NZ. A very comprehensive process is followed to assess Craig in all areas of the roles and responsibilities of being a principal.

Once again, Craig is to be congratulated on an outstanding appraisal and the very high standard of his performance across all aspects of his role. The Board was especially proud to read the statement that 'St Heliers School is a model for best practice'.

As a Board we are very fortunate to be connected to the success that Craig's expertise and commitment bring to St Heliers School.

Announcement. The last paragraph leads nicely in to this one where the Board is pleased to announce that toward the end of last year, we made the decision to award Craig with a term of long service leave. This is in recognition of almost 18 years of unwavering dedication to the children, staff and community of St Heliers School. Craig has devoted himself tirelessly to the school and we are happy to be able to acknowledge that in this way. The leave has been set for Term 3 of this year, and we very much hope that the current events do not prevent this from occurring.

Farewells. Our school is celebrating with regret the retirement of two key staff members: Janet Raggett and Donna Harris. Every single school family will have been helped by Janet in her role as school secretary for the past ten years. She has given a huge amount to her varied and demanding duties, and has shown an exceptional ability to be interrupted constantly while continuing to smile regardless. Janet was due to leave us on 1 May but the actual date may be revised in light of the current situation.

Donna Harris is our International Student Manager and has been with St Heliers for 23 years. Her depth of experience and passion for meeting the needs of our International Student Community has been of enormous value and will be difficult to replicate. Her work has profoundly enhanced the lives of many of our families, and her role is also of significant financial benefit to the school. Donna was to leave us at the end of Term 1, and a fitting farewell will be re-scheduled.

The Board would like to sincerely thank Janet and Donna for their contribution to St Heliers over the years. We will miss them both but wish them every happiness for the years ahead.

Professional Development. From the beginning of the year the staff have enthusiastically taken on professional development in Assessment for Learning and congratulations are to be offered for the way this has been led. This program investigates the way assessment information is used by teachers to adjust their teaching strategies, and by students to adjust their learning strategies. Everyone has fully embraced the opportunity to maximise what this tool can do to make a difference to the educational outcomes of our children.

The Board had also committed themselves to a number of upcoming professional development offerings, and we were able to attend a Finance Workshop that provided complete assurance that our systems meet and exceed all requirements. All other workshops however, including Behaviour Management, The Board as a Good Employer, and Governance Essentials have had to be re-scheduled.

Kāhui Ako. A couple of weeks ago the Board attended a combined Community of Learning Board meeting. It is always good to talk with the Boards of Glendowie School, Churchill Park School and Glendowie College, and it was particularly interesting to hear about the Kāhui Ako website that is currently being developed. Once complete, this will be a great resource for all parents to understand our particular COL and its specific achievement challenges and goals. A preview can be seen at: <https://www.glendowie.school.nz/glendowie-kahui-ako-2/>

Survey. The Board is currently giving consideration to a school community survey. This is a very general approach to the community to confirm that our vision and values, environment, communication and future priorities still align with expectation. We hope to bring this to you later in the year.

And finally **Auckland Regional Executive Board.** Late last year I was voted on to the NZ School Trustees Association Auckland Regional Executive Board. This is a Board of nine people throughout Auckland who are responsible for coordinating communication and professional development to meet the needs of over 400 school boards in our region. I am excited about the opportunity to serve at this level for the next three years, which will allow me to connect with a broad range of people from the Auckland community and the Ministry of Education who all share an enormous amount of experience in, and passion for, education in New Zealand.

In closing... Take care of yourself and your bubble over the coming weeks. Allow everyone the highs and lows that we will all inevitably feel as a result of missing our 'normal'.

There will be challenging days ahead but please remember that conversations, laughter, support and love have not been cancelled and we are likely to have more time available for them, so plant yourself firmly in the midst of those things and we will all get through this journey together. I very much look forward to seeing our playgrounds full of children again, and parents who can stop for a chat or have a coffee and return to that sense of connectedness that comes from being a part of the St Heliers School Community.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathy', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kathy Harding
Chair

St Heliers School Board of Trustees